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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents results from four survey questions asked of the audience and papers presented at a 1995 teleconference on assessment issues with African American adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. An introductory paper, "Multiple Factors Impacting the Assessment and Instruction of African American Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities" (Stacia F. Schmidt, Rebecca S. Curtis, and Noel Gregg), reports that the survey found that multiple influences affect African Americans with learning disabilities throughout their entire academic and professional careers. Seven papers addressing other aspects of these issues are then presented: (1) "Self-Concept: Assessment and Intervention for African American Learners with Problems" (Festus E.Obiakor); (2) "Learning Left from Right: 'No Struggle, No Progress': A Consumer's Voice" (Tamekia Tate); (3) "Cognitive and Affective Assessment of African American Students: Perspectives of a School Psychologist" (Geri Y. Tharpe); (4) "Linguistic Bias in the Assessment of African Americans with Learning Disabilities" (Robin E. Perkins-Gordon); (5) "Portfolio and Dynamic Assessment: An Authentic Look at Individual Differences" (Kim Day); (6) "Collaboration, Consultation, and Cooperation: The 'Whole Village at Work'" (Obiakor); and (7) "Additional References: African American Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities" (Schmidt and Curtis). (Individual papers contain references.) (DB)

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African American Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities:

An Overview of Assessment Issues

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Contents

1. **Introduction: Multiple Factors Impacting the Assess ment and Instruction of African American Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities**
   Stacia Schmidt, Rebecca Curtis, Noel Gregg..... 3

2. **Self-Concept: Assessment and Intervention for African-American Learners with Problems**
   Festus Obiakor..... 15

3. **Learning Left from Right: "No Struggle, No Progress"**
   A Consumer's Voice: Tamekia Tate..... 29

4. **Cognitive and Affective Assessment of African American Students: Perspectives of a School Psychologist**
   Geri Tharpe..... 37

5. **Linguistic Bias in the Assessment of African Americans with Learning Disabilities**
   Robin Gordon..... 53

6. **Portfolio and Dynamic Assessment . . . An Authentic Look at Individual Differences**
   Kim Day..... 65

7. **Collaboration, Consultation, and Cooperation: The "Whole Village at Work"**
   Festus Obiakor..... 77

8. **Additional References: African-American Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities**
   Stacia Schmidt, Rebecca Curtis..... 93

1.

Introduction: Multiple Factors Impacting the Assessment and Instruction of African American Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities

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Federal and state dollars channeled into the development of secondary transitional programs over the last decade have not led to a positive entry into either postsecondary education or the work force for the population with learning disabilities (Wagner, 1992). Research on graduating secondary students with learning disabilities uncovers ineffective assessment and programming for adolescents with learning disabilities that result in recurrent difficulties throughout adulthood (Malcolm, Polatjko & Simmons, 1990). Despite a limited body of research focusing specifically on the transition and career choices of adolescents with learning disabilities, we know even less about the impact of minority or socioeconomic status on career outcomes for this population.

Identifying effective assessment and instructional programming for the African American population with learning disabilities is an ever increasing priority for individuals concerned about ensuring this population is prepared to meet the demands of our global economy. Recently, the Children's Defense Fund (1993) reported the following statistics, providing clear evidence of a bleak future for many

AfricanAmerican youth: 20% of all children live in poverty and about 50% of African American children live in poverty; every 95 seconds an African American baby is born in poverty; every three minutes a baby is born to an African American mother that never received a high school degree; every seven seconds of the school day an African American student drops out of school (Children's Defense Fund, 1993). With our knowledge of prenatal, early childhood deprivation, and environmental influenees on learning, the future of many of our African American youth appears at risk. An additional support for this prognosis is the findings by the U. S. Bureau of Census (1992) which states 48% of the African American public school population was not expected to experience normal school progression without failure.

The impact of minority status (Leong, 1995) as well as socioeconomic status (Haveman & Wolf, 1994) parallel the risk factors accompanying disability (Rojewski, 1994). Career development of persons with learning disabilities must be considered from an ecological perspective rather than focusing on single risk factors in isolation (i.e., minority status, socioeconomic status or disability). While researchers across disciplines have identified the importance of contextual factors in the career development of minorities and individuals with disabilities, little empirical research has addressed the mediating factors interacting on the development of African American adolescents with learning disabilities (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Vondracek & Fouad, 1994; Szymanski, Hershenson, Ettinger, & Enright, 1996).

Interactive Television Broadcast

In an attempt to better understand the perspective of the African American community throughout the State of Georgia, the Learning Disabilities Research and Training Center (LDRTC) embarked on a series of research that began with an interactive television broadcast in the winter of 1995 via the Georgia Satellite Academic and Medical Systems (GSAMS). The broadcast teleconference consisted of a series of presentations. Each individual participating was given

a packet of resources which included a needs assessment questionnaire. Of the eight sites, six sites returned the questionnaires. From a total attendance of 97 individuals, 83 responded tothe questionnaire.

Participants

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of participants were female. Approximately half of the participants were African American with the other half consisting of Caucasian, Asian American and Hispanic. Most of the persons completing the questionnaire were service providers representing vocational rehabilitation services and special education. The educational levels of participants ranged from 14 years to 20 years of education with the majority of individuals having 18 years of schooling.

Results of Questionnaire

Analyses were done for each response question based on the percentage of questions answered. Percentage of ethnicity, gender, and discipline were investigated for any relevant questions.

Respondents (n=82) were asked to rank their opinions of the most significant problem for African Americans with learning disabilities. The majority of respondents (29%) reported assessment as the greatest problem facing adolescents and adults with learning problems. In addition, 24% of the respondents identified an insensitivity toward cultural and racial issues by service providers. Twenty-three percent of the group reported economic issues as barriers to adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. Twenty-one percent expressed that perceptions within the African American community regarding learning disabilities was a hindrance. Twelve percent responded that instructional materials used with adolescents and adults with learning disabilities were not culturally relevant.

The issue of adequacy of services for African Americans with learning disabilities was explored throughout the questionnaire. When asked if there are adequate services available for African Americans with learning disabilities, 57% responded no and 39% responded yes

(n=77). Of the respondents that stated no, 38% were female and 9% were male. Thirty-four percent of the respondents were African American, 21% were Caucasian, and 2% were Hispanic and other. Of the respondents that expressed a yes opinion, the gender was split evenly with 16% male andfemale. Twenty-six percent of those participants were African American, 12% were Caucasian, and 1% was Asian American.

Research has supported that there are many risk factors that impact on disability issues (Szymanski et al., 1996). Therefore, questions were presented to the respondents (n=76) that explored the multiple factors impacting the assessment of adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. Twenty percent of the respondents identified cultural bias in assessment as the primary problem for this population. Thirteen percent believed that the greatest risk factor was problems associated with assessing learning disabilities, for example, the use of inappropriate assessment tools and inconsistent diagnostic and services qualifications for having learning disabilities. Sixty-one percent said both, cultural bias and problems associated with assessment, impacted the assessment of African Americans with learning disabilities. Seven percent believed other factors were involved. From the individuals who responded that both factors of cultural bias and problems related to assessment were problematic, 50% were female, 15% were male, 35% African American, 22% Caucasian, and 2% other.

The respondents answers were investigated across disciplines. Fifty-three percent of special educators believed that both factors of cultural bias and problems associated with assessment are the major elements impacting assessment for African American adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. Twelve percent of special educators responded that cultural bias in assessment is the greatest factor and 6% believed problems associated with assessment is the major variable impacting adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. Forty-three percent of vocational rehabilitation professionals responded that that both cultural bias and problems associated with assessment are the greatest factors impacting assessment. Twenty

percent answered problems associated with assessment and 13% answered cultural bias as the greatest factor impacting African American adolescents and adults with learning disabilities.

The final question reported asked participants if there are adequatepost-secondary options (educational or vocational) for African Americans with learning disabilities. Under educational options, 63% of the respondents (n= 70) reported no and 37% responded yes. Forty-seven percent of those who responded no were female and 15% were male. For the yes answer, 24% were female and 15% were male. When viewed across disciplines, professionals agreed that there are not adequate post-secondary educational options for African Americans with learning disabilities.

The issue of adequacy of vocational options for addressing adolescents and adults with learning disabilities was explored with the respondents. Of the 73 responding, 55% felt that the population with learning disabilities did not have adequate vocational options and 45% felt that vocational options were adequate. The gender breakdown across this question was 38% female and 18% male for the no response and 32% female and 12% male for the yes response. Looking across disciplines, 46% of the vocational rehabilitation counselors replied yes and 36% answered no while 35% of special educators responded yes and 41% no.

Discussion

The results of the questionnaire investigating the factors impacting assessment and programming for adolescents and adults with learning disabilities provide a direction for future service and research. Assessment was considered the greatest overall problem for African Americans with learning disabilities by the majority of the respondents. Concern over assessment issues helped prompt the continued investigation by the LDRTC beginning with this monograph. However, as we look at the other categories provided, the percentages are so close that one cannot discount the impact of other risk factors such as cultural insensitivity, economic barriers, and perceptions of

learning disabilities within the African American community. These additional risk variables appear to be considered equally a problem to professionals and individuals dealing with African Americans with learning disabilities. For instance, when the question of whether cultural bias or assessment was more of a problem for African Americans with learning disabilities, vocational rehabilitation specialists and special educators answered that both arecontributing factors. Again, supporting the idea that multiple factors are impacting the assessment and programming needs of African Americans with learning disabilities.

Across disciplines there are varying opinions and perceptions of the difficulties that African Americans with learning disabilities experience. When addressing the same question of cultural bias or assessment problems, vocational rehabilitation professionals chose problems with assessment as the next highest percentage after choosing both answers while special educators chose cultural insensitivity.

Responses to the last question of the survey also demonstrated the different perceptions across fields. The question addressed whether postsecondary educational or vocational options were adequate for African Americans with learning disabilities. The overall answer was that there are not adequate services either educationally or vocationally. However, there was a large difference between the yes and no answers of the vocational rehabilitation versus special educators. In fact, under vocational services, a majority of vocational rehabilitation specialists responded that there are adequate services, going against the majority opinion that there are not adequate services.

In addition, the responses from the needs assessment questionnaire used for the study provided no significant differences by ethnicity (African American versus Caucasian) or gender for respondents. However, further research investigating bias across ethnicity and gender is needed.

National Satellite Teleconference

The results of this questionnaire led to the production of a national interactive satellite teleconference on the subject of *African Americans with Learning Disabilities: Issues of Assessment* broadcast October 19, 1996 by The University of Georgia/Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, Learning Disabilities Research and Training Center. During the teleconference, four survey questions were asked of the audience. The audience used a single call-answer phone system to respond to the questions. Table 2 lists these questions and their responses.

Of interest are Questions 1 and 2. Question 1 asked viewers what area of assessment needed to be better addressed when evaluating African American youth. Respondents (n=669) overwhelmingly indicated self-concept (64%) over cognitive ability (36%) as an area needing to be better addressed in assessment. Question 2 asked if professionals assessing special needs in the viewer's local area had received adequate training in order to assess African American youth based on the population's needs. Again, viewer's responses were one-sided with 85% indicating no and 15% indicating yes (n=569). Responses to the national satellite teleconference appear to echo conclusions drawn from responses to the previous needs assessment. That is, multiple factors impact the assessment and programming needs of African Americans with learning disabilities. Additionally, the perception of viewers to both the national satellite teleconference and the interactive television broadcast indicate a lack of trained personnel providing adequate services in a culturally sensitive manner.

Conclusion

The combined results of the needs assessment questionnaire from the LDRTC GSAMS broadcast and the survey questions from the LDRTC satellite teleconference, support a definite concern for non-biased assessment,effects of programming, self-concept, and cultural sensitivity issues when assessing African American youth. In addi-

tion, professionals, across disciplines, failed to agree on one risk factor impacting African American adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. Thereby, pointing to multiple influences effecting African Americans with learning disabilities throughout their entire academic and professional careers. These multiple influences must be recognized and addressed by our social system.

This monograph is an attempt to address, in part, the multiple influences affecting the assessment of African American youth with learning disabilities. Professionals in the fields of special education and rehabilitation have contributed to this monograph. They bring with them their expertise in the area of assessment. Each author has focused on a separate component of the assessment of African American youth with learning disabilities. Some topics may be thought of as non-traditional in that the context of assessment considered in this monograph is not based solely on a cognitive or psychoeducational model. While these areas of assessment are vital, it is equally important to broaden the manner in which assessment is conceptualized in order to ensure the sensitive and professional assessment of African American youth with learning disabilities. By looking at multiple factors in assessment, service providers, in turn, are given multiple clues to offering adequate services for this population. Therefore, based upon an examination of issues impacting assessment, the following areas are discussed: self-concept and African-American youth; cognitive and affective assessment; linguistic bias in assessment; portfolio and dynamic assessment; and, collaboration and consultation. Included in this monograph is a chapter written by an African American student. This chapter, above all, gives voice to the subject of this monograph; African American youths with learning disabilities.

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Table 1

Description of Participants*

Description	Percentage
Vocation:	
Vocational Rehabilitation	33
Special Education	18
Other	18
Regular Education Services	8
Consumer	7
Family Member of Consumer	6
Vocational Education Services	1
Ethnicity:	
African American	46
Caucasian	45
Asian American	1
Hispanic	1
Gender:	
Female	53
Male	23

*Note. n=83.

Table 2

Survey Questions and Results from National Satellite Teleconference: *African Americans with Learning Disabilities: Issues of Assessment*

Questions	Answer Choices	*Results
Question 1:		
Which one of the following two areas of assessment need to be better addressed in the evaluation of African American youth?	self-concept	64%
	cognitive ability	36%
Question 2:		
Do you feel that the professionals involved in the assessment of special needs in your area have received adequate training to sensitize them to the needs of African American	yes	15%
	no	85%
Question 3:		
Would you be interested in a teleconference that would focus on the instructional needs of African American youth with learning disabilities?	yes	25%
	no	76%
Question 4:		
Which of the following two minorities would you like to see highlighted in a future teleconference?	Native American	32%
	Hispanic	68%

*Note: Question 1, n=669; Question 2, n=569; Question 3, n=428, Question 4, n=291.

2.

Self-Concept: Assessment And Intervention For African-American Learners With Problems

Festus E. Obiakor, Ph. D., Emporia State University[1]

American education has been traditionally Eurocentric. Cole (1983) noted that "the struggle to obtain equal access to quality education for Black Americans has been long and arduous" (p. 246). This struggle has stimulated a constant search for self-identity and freedom through advocacy, litigation and legislation. The Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas case of 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the myriad of discriminatory cases which led to the institution of many laws and regulations are examples of efforts made to combat social, economic, and political problems facing African Americans in mainstream America. Although African American students are making gains, they have the lowest socioeconomic status scores (as measured by family income), the lowest math achievement scores, and the second lowest reading scores when compared to students from other racial and ethnic groups. The high school completion rate for African American students appears to be rising since 1975, however, it is still significantly below the rate for Whites; dropout rates in big cities are extremely high (40-60%) for African Americans. Although rates are improving, African American students are still less likely to enter and complete college and other postsecondary education experiences than most other students (Algozzine & Obiakor, 1995; Ornstein & Levine, 1993).

[1]**Special thanks to Kim Maxwell and Emporia State University Foundation for their support in this work.**

It has become increasingly clear that results of litigation and legislation in the 1960s and 1970s have not fully led to the maximizationof potential of African American learners (Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995; Obiakor, Algozzine, & Ford, 1993; Voltz, 1995). Old unworkable solutions have continued to re-emerge -- they have somehow culminated to personal and social identity crises that have, to a large extent, resulted in the "victim" mentality and the "acting white" syndrome (Barker, 1994; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Kunjufu, 1984; Ogbu, 1978, 1994; Powell Hobson & Hobson, 1992). These multidimensional problems have led to unwarranted generalizations, categorizations, and stereotypic tendencies prevalent in schools and communities (Algozzine & Obiakor, 1995; Obiakor, 1990, 1994). Many scholars have attributed academic failures of some African American students to undergirding genetic deficits (Herrnstein, 1971; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969, 1973; Shockley, 1972). Others have attributed success or failure of African Americans to "high" or "low" self-concept, self-perception, or self-image (Aryal, 1987; Barker, 1994; Clark, 1963; Lewin, 1948). Parillo (1980), however, warned that "portraying negative self-image as a fairly general tendency among minority group members, may be too broad a generalization" (p. 28).

Since self-concept is cited as a formidable and significant variable in human behavior (Brooks, 1991; Canfield & Siccone, 1993; Fitts, 1972; Osborne, 1996; Rogers, 1951; Siccone & Canfield, 1993; Swann, 1992), negative presumptions about self-concepts of African Americans fail to value the efforts of many of them to succeed in today's schools. As Powell-Hobson and Hobson (1992) pointed out, "teacher's perception of a student leads directly to an expectation of the student. If the teacher perceives the child as intelligent, then he or she will expect above-average work from the child. A child's performance tends to mirror the expectations of his or her teachers" (p. 154). Additionally, negative presumptions (a) foster the use of simplistic constructs or labels and illusionary conclusions to deal with serious problems (Obiakor, 1996), (b) deny the concepts of intra and inter-individual differences (Heward, 1996), (c) minimize the roles that individuals play in the development process of others (Osborne,

1996), and (d) ignore the multifaceted nature of the "self" (Marsh, 1987; Marsh, Byrne, & Shavelson, 1988; Marsh & Johnson, 1994; Muller, 1978; Muller, Chambliss & Muller, 1982; Obiakor & Algozzine, 1994; Obiakor & Stile, 1989, 1990, 1994; Obiakor, Stile, &Muller, 1988, 1994). In this chapter, I discuss self-concepts of African American learners. Embedded in my discussion are self-concept enhancement techniques for these students.

Self-Concept Construct: Beyond Tradition

Self-concept has been the primary focus of academic programs for at-risk, disadvantaged, and atypical students, yet it continues to mean different things to different people (Obiakor & Algozzine, 1994; Osborne, 1996; Webb-Johnson, Obiakor & Algozzine, 1995). The variability in the definition, assessment, and interpretation of self-concept has led to the proliferation of measurement tools. Two particular models (perceptual and operational) have dominated the debate on the self-concept construct.

Perceptual Self-Concept Model

The traditional/classical definition of self-concept has been based on the interrelated self (Rogers, 1951; Snygg & Combs, 1968). Osborne (1996) defined self-concept as "the sum total of the attributes, abilities, and values that an individual believes defines who he or she is" (p. 23). This view, which has come to be known as the "perceptual" or "global" model of self-concept, simply describes how one sees or perceives himself/herself. This model assumes that one's self-perceptions are fully developed before he/she interacts with people outside the home or enters the classroom for the first time. According to Canfield and Wells (1994), "by the time a child reaches school age his self-concept is
well formed and his reactions to learning, to school failure and success, and to the physical, social, and emotional climate of the classroom will be determined by the beliefs and attitudes he has about himself" (p. 6).

From the perspective presented above, a change in self-concept is likely to affect a wide range of behaviors. Canfield and Wells (1994) developed what they called, "the Poker Chip theory," which simply indicates that in any learning situation, "the student who has a good deal of success in the past will be likely to risk success again, if he(she) should fail, his(her) self-concept can 'afford' it. A student with a history predominated by failures will be reluctant to risk failure again. His(her) depleted self-concept cannot afford it" (pp. 6-7). This theory sounds like a good "mother's story," however, in reality it implies that students who come from disadvantaged environments or those who have the "decks stacked against them," socio-economically and racially, will not succeed in school programs. If this traditional model of self-concept is applied to African American learners in the classroom, it will affect many aspects of students' lives including the involvement of teachers and schools as well as home aspects of the students. This practice will (a) lead to errors in judgement, (b) encourage student labeling or categorization, (c) foster negative aspects of the self-fulfilling prophecy, and (d) hamper classroom learning or functional learning outcomes. It becomes counter-productive to use the perceptual conceptualization of the self in designing remedial and supportive programs for African American learners at all educational levels.

Furthermore, the traditional self-concept assessment tools are based on the underlying presumption that everyone understands the meaning of self-concept from one perspective. These tools evidence problems in the areas of validity, reliability, and technical adequacy (Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, 1992); and even those that have produced consistent results suffer from the problem of whether they measure what they actually purport to measure (Dana, 1984, 1993; Obiakor, 1992, 1994). Dana (1993) argued that "the methods of conducting the assessment process, and the interpretative judgements involved, as well as the theoretical model of personality, are all consistent with the Eurocentricworld view and model of science" (p. 92). He noted that "even when the outcomes of culturally unsophisticated assessment are not so extreme, there will always be a possibility for confounding culture and psychopathologies" (p. 92). In

almost all forms of self-concept assessment, assessor bias and lack of training for assessors constitute tremendous problems for African American learners. Dana (1993) wrote:

> Differences between assessor expectations for self-disclosure and client willingness to self-disclose may influence the assessment process and contribute to difficulties in communication ... Self-disclosure is believed to be universal, although there is cultural mediation of this behavior. In some cultures, self-disclosure may be desirable and feasible only in the context of particular relationships, especially in intimate or extended family contexts. In assessment settings, self-revelation is often required in formats that may be unfamiliar to assessors who are not test wise as a result of exposure to the educational system in this country. As a result, it would be helpful to know prior to a particular assessment process how the assessor, the relationship, the setting, or the test format can influence self-disclosure. (pp. 103-104)

Operational Self-Concept Model

The operational model of self-concept presents an alternate view in which self-concept is described as an individual's repertoire of self-descriptive behavior (Helper, 1955; Marsh, Parker & Barnes, 1985; Marsh & Smith, 1986; Muller, 1978; Shavelson, Bolus & Keasling, 1980). Rather than look at self-concept as simply "positive" or "negative," the operational view indicates that a student's self-descriptions can be accurate or inaccurate, consistent or contradictory, extensive or limited, or covert or overt, as well as sometimes changing as the context changes. As Kleinke (1994) pointed out:

> A person's self-image is certainly affected by past experience, and it may be of value to explore the process of how one has developed into her or his present self. What is more important, however, is to realize that one's self is not fixedand immutable. First, we have a variety of possible selves we can choose to emphasize to fit particular situations. Second, we are not bound to our perceptions of who we are in the present. The future offers the opportunity for our selves to

evolve in whatever direction we choose to follow. (pp. 259-260)

Muller, Chambliss, and Muller (1982) argued that "self-descriptive behaviors quantified in terms of positiveness should, when factor analyzed, yield a number of discrete, internally consistent factors" (p. 7). Operationalized in this way, self-concept has three subsets (self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-ideal) that can be measured in areas such as physical maturity, peer relations, academic success, and school adaptiveness (Obiakor, 1992; Obiakor, & Stile, 1989, 1990; Obiakor, Stile, & Muller, 1994). Self-knowledge is a subset of self-descriptive behaviors which describe the individual's characteristics or qualities. It includes self-descriptions which indicate an evaluation of characteristics but does not include statements which indicate self-valuations. A sample statement is, "I know that I have problems succeeding in school." Self-esteem is the subset of self-descriptive behaviors which indicate self-valuations. In this instance, the individual evaluates certain self-characteristics relative to how he values those characteristics. A sample statement is "I like myself for who I am." Self-ideal is the subset of self-descriptive behaviors that indicate self-qualities which the student desires to achieve or maintain through the expenditure of personal efforts. A sample statement is "I will endeavor to work hard in spite of my problems or who I am."

It appears that dividing self-concept into discrete construct areas has strong educational implications for African American learners, especially those with problems. First, teachers and service providers will understand the area-specific, situation-specific, and multidimensional nature of self-concept, i.e., a deficit in one area of self-concept does not necessarily mean a deficit in other areas of self-concept. This will make it easier to work on the area of deficiency using the area of strength. Second, self-concept will not be viewed as a static phenomenon that is genetically handed down. For instance, in formulating his theory about the"eclectic self," Osborne (1996) discovered that "self-concept is a cognitive entity involving the thoughts the individual has about his or her self-images and the manner in which those thoughts are integrated with existing infor-

mation" (p. 3). Third, since self-concept is a self-descriptive behavior, it is fluid. On this basis, it can be enhanced and developed by African American students themselves and those who interact with them. According to Kleinke (1994), "people tend to believe that, if only they had higher self-esteem, they would be able to reach higher achievements. They lose sight of the fact that self-esteem does not result in achievements, rather, it is achievements that boost self-esteem" (p. 260). Fourth, to effectively enhance self-concepts, African American learners must be involved in the continuous process of learning.

Techniques For Enhancing Self-Concepts Of African-American Learners

There is enough data to conclude that self-concepts of African Americans can be developed and enhanced. Many programs have been successful in this regard. One such program is the 24 Open Form Self-Concept Questions that allows students to access instruction and work on their self-concepts simultaneously (Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995). Strategies follow that can be beneficial to African American learners:

1. Educators and service providers must understand their roles as they interact with African American students. They must be knowledgeable of the operational model of self-concepts. This knowledge will influence their techniques of assessment, categorization, and intervention (Obiakor, 1992, 1995).

2. Educators and service providers must be careful in their use of traditional measurement tools (Hoy & Gregg, 1994). What use is an instrument if it fails to measure what it purports to measure?

3. Students have a role in enhancing their self-concepts (Obiakor,1992, 1995; Osborne, 1996; Webb-Johnson, Obiakor & Algozzine, 1995). Self-knowledge is not enough. Self-love and self-empowerment are also important.

4. Parents have a role in building the self-concepts of their children (Powell Hobson & Hobson, 1992; Simpson, 1996). Blaming teachers and service providers for all their children's problems demonstrates a lack of responsibility for their children's psychological well-being.

5. Negative labels that are loaded with negative stereotypes are based on perceptions (Algozzine & Obiakor, 1995; Kunjufu, 1984; Obiakor, 1980, 1992, 1995). Generally, perceptions cannot be scientifically proven.

6. Relevant curricula stimulate African American students' learning (Ford, Obiakor & Patton, 1995). Such curricula are usually culturally sensitive and highlight realistic role modeling.

7. Teachers with "real pedagogical power" provide students with novel tasks and ideas (Hilliard, 1992). Such teachers believe that failure is not the end of the road for students but an incentive for them to work harder.

8. African American learners fully involve themselves in environments with reasonable expectations. They bloom in classrooms where they are listened to and allowed to make mistakes (Obiakor, 1990).

9. Empowering classrooms create school and community networks and allow African American learners to maximize their potential, e.g., the Management Empowerment in Classrooms of Choice Attributes (MECCA) program (Ford & Obiakor, 1995; Webb-Johnson, Obiakor & Algozzine, 1995).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented multidimensional problems that affect African American learners in schools and communities. One problem that transcends all problems is the self-concept problem, yet it means different things to different people. The perceptual model that views self-concept as an interrelated perception of the self appears to be too global to address issues of inter-individual and intra-individual differences among African American students. On the contrary, the operational notion of self-concept as an individual's repertoire of self-descriptive behaviors fosters accurate self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-ideal. From this perspective, self-concepts of African Americans can be accurate or inaccurate, consistent or contradictory, extensive or limited, covert or overt, and sometimes change as contexts change. Put another way, self-concepts of African Americanlearners can be devalued or enhanced by educators, service providers, parents, and communities. As Brooks (1991) succinctly pointed out:

> While all students deserve to have their islands of competence displayed and built upon, there is a more urgent need to do so for those students who lack confidence in their ability to learn. If we can reinforce the areas of strength these students possess, my experience has been that we can open the way for a "ripple effect," where students may be willing to venture forth and confront tasks that have been problematic for them. (p. 32)

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3.

A Perspective from an African American College Student with Learning Disabilities

Learning Left from Right
"No Struggle, No Progress"

Tamekia Tate, The University of Georgia

My name is Tamekia Tate, and I was the kid who did not know her left hand from her right hand in the first grade. I didn't know why people even made the distinction between left and right. Since no one gave me what I felt was a good reason why left and right existed, I was not interested in learning the difference between the two. Similarly, it never made a difference to me whether "the loop" on a 'b' went this way, or 'd' that way, as long as the loop was on the bottom of the line. I told my kindergarten teacher that I simply could not learn how to write because my hands were not developed enough to properly grasp a pencil. In addition, I did not understand why it was necessary to pay attention to the teacher after she stopped saying something I found interesting. In fact, I found it impossible to do so.

My mother didn't understand why she was called in to talk to my first grade teacher almost every week to account for the inattentive, loquacious, generally inconsistent behavior and performance of her otherwise, pleasant child. Knowing I was bright, she obviously assumed that I was either, not trying hard enough, or there was something legitimately wrong with the way I processed information. Initially, my mom assumed the latter of the two assumptions. For a while, I became so accustomed to and injured by the phrase, "You're just not trying hard enough," that now the mere mention of the sentence brings tears to my eyes. To this day, I hear the "dreaded

phrase" in my sleep. It did not take long for my mother to realize that there was really something wrong with me.

My mother's concern and my increased frustration lead to our subsequent visits to professionals to identify the source of the problem. The results of my first assessment indicated that my IQ was above average. During the same year as my first evaluation, I attended three separate schools, two private and one public. My mother worked relentlessly to find the right academic setting for me.

At the end of my first grade year, my mother sent me to Colorado to live with her parents while she completed her post-graduate studies. Although I received daily tutorial assistance from my maternal grandparents, I continued to suffer from academic frustration. During my second grade year, I was placed in a class for talented and gifted students, but my performance in math and spelling was well below the class average. I returned home to Georgia shortly before my third grade year.

The school I attended in Georgia had a program to integrate the county school-aged population. Although I had no problem adjusting to another predominately "white" school, it did take a while for me to adjust to the 45 minute commute to and from school everyday. On average, my day began at 5:30 a.m. and ended at 5:00 p.m. when I arrived home from school. The long bus ride was not the focus of my problem.

At this new school my scholastic performance in math and spelling was suboptimal while I preformed on grade level in all of my other subjects. My mother and my teacher noticed that I was experiencing difficulties with time management, sequential thinking, and organizational skills. As other students progressed, I fell further behind them. By the time I entered the fourth grade my confidence was "shot" and my outlook on my scholastic and social performance was grim. However, my fourth grade teacher took a special interest in me. She was attentive to all her students' well being. She took time to nurture my "wounded" ego as well as provide extra

academic support when it was necessary. My self esteemimproved. However, I still continued to experience the academic difficulties I had in the past. Sensing my frustration, my mother decided to have me go through more extensive diagnostic testing conducted to identify any possible learning problems.

In December of 1984 my mother and I traveled to Colorado where I was to have my evaluation done. The results of the testing revealed that I "can solve problems by arranging the input in sequential, or serial order as well as [I do] when problems are spacial, analogic or organizational [but] the input must be integrated and synthesized simultaneously to produce appropriate solutions." My strengths were assessed in areas of visual alertness, concentration, planning abilities, and reasoning. My weaknesses were observed in my visual perception, fine and gross motor coordination, visual motor integration, and visual memory. Socially and emotionally, my examiners assessed that I was a "constricted child with very high needs for achievement." I was not comfortable with emotional expression and I found "spontaneous relating" threatening. The psychologist at this center concluded that my visual perceptual and motor problems "clearly impede [me] from achieving academically to the degree that [my] reasoning skills would suggest." My difficulties were attributed to gross and fine motor dyspraxia. It was recommended that special academic intervention as well as individual counseling be used "to help [me] become more emotionally expressive."

Academic assistance is not easily found in the public school systems. Although special education classes are offered in public schools by force of law, not every school has accommodations for students with learning disabilities. The private school I had been attending in Georgia did not offer special education classes, and my fifth grade teacher made it all too clear that she neither had the time nor the patience to spend explaining things to what she called a "stupid". Needless to say, shortly after the "stupid" incident my mother found another school for me that did offer services to students with learning disabilities.

I valued the help I received in my special education class but, there were a few disadvantages. I only got the opportunity to go to that class two times a week and I was taken out of my regular class which meant I missed out on the material presented in class while I received help with my learning disability. The second disadvantage is that children with alltypes of learning and developmental disabilities were placed in the same class together including children with mild retardation. To say the least, I had some problems getting the undivided attention of my instructor.

By March of 1985, I had transferred to yet another school, but this one was different. This school was a five day a week Catholic boarding school for children with above average IQ's and specific learning and, or emotional disabilities. I can honestly say that I got the most comprehensive assistance for my learning disabilities and the difficulties that I experienced emotionally and socially as a result of this programming. My mother and I attended monthly family therapy sessions with my counselor which facilitated a better understanding of each other and my learning disabilities. Through my therapy sessions I came to a better understanding of myself, and how I affected others. Before I came to this school, I had no idea why I often seemed to rub people the wrong way. I soon learned that I had no idea how to read body language except in instances of hostility. With the help of the professionals at this school, I learned to read body language and a lot more at my new school. In three years I learned vital social skills (that I had somehow never developed in the past) and I regained the confidence in myself and my academic abilities that I had lost in the five years I spent in schools prior to attending this school.

My middle school years began in 1988, requiring a switch to another school. Due to my former excellent special education curriculum, I excelled at every subject but Pre-Algebra and Band during middle school. My dyspraxia and dyscalcula were not "cured", but I did learn coping and compensating skills. I no longer felt "defective" because I could not perfectly perform everything. I accepted my failings as a fact of life.

Unfortunately, my problems and frustrations with Algebra increased in high school. I was told I would not be able to take Algebra in high school because of my poor performance in Pre-Algebra in middle school. I fought for the right to take the class because without it I could not graduate from high school with a college preparatory diploma. I knew that major colleges and universities do not accept students who do not take college preparatory courses in high school and I was not going to let a "C" in Pre-Algebra keep me out of a good college. I completed my first quarter of Algebra with a "C" average. I went on to fail the second quarter of Algebra twice. Needless to say, I felt pretty defeated and my fellow classmates calling me stupid did not help my disposition. Even though I spent a summer auditing Algebra before I started high school, I failed it. I thought I would never learn how to properly complete an equation. My mother got me help from the learning disabilities department, but the task before her was not an easy one.

During the next three years I was eligible for a LD class in which I could get help from a teacher in all of my subjects as well as extra time to study and complete my work. Once again, however, the class atmosphere was a little disturbing. In my resource class there were students with learning disabilities like me, and there were students who spent much of the class time talking to the air conditioning vents. While at Riverwood High School I experienced a lot of extracurricular success. I got to be the first Black person in the school's twenty year history to successfully audition for the Academic Bowl team for two years.

Bearing in mind that college would present a more academically rigorous challenge than high school, I searched for schools that offered services to students with learning disabilities. I was particularly interested in the availability of accommodations such as note takers, extended time for tests, books on tape, oral examinations and computer assisted assignments. Unfortunately, information on schools offering assistance or programs for learning disabled students was not available through my high school counseling office. Therefore, I

spent several hours in the library searching for institutions in my price range that offered myintended major. Another criterion that I considered was the size and portion of the African-American student body within the institution.

Upon entering college, I had a few of the same reservations that I had experienced when entering high school. Would I fit in? Would I succeed according to my expectations? Would I be able to maintain the grade point average necessary to retain my scholarship? Both my parents are college graduates and have earned post-graduate degrees. Moreover, my mother graduated "Magna cum laude" from the University of Colorado. Both maternal grandparents are college graduates and educators. Although my mother and grandparents never made a "big deal" about their academic accomplishments, I have always felt that each generation should strive to meet or surpass the achievements of the generation that came before. I have been afraid of "falling short" of the precedents of educational success set in my family. Although I had only seriously considered one predominately Black institution, I was a bit worried about what to expect from a predominately "White" institution.

To sum up based on my experiences, I would advise administrators, educators, and parents not to prescribe limits to the potential of a student with learning disabilities. Rather, view their disability as a challenge for the student and educators to explore new approaches to communicating educational concepts in ways that the information may be understood and processed by the student.

It is the educators responsibility to communicate to the student that there are no limits to the educational success that he or she can achieve. Help the student set long term and short term goals and discuss plans for achieving them. Discuss college as an option as well as contingency plans. The student must acquire an understanding of self-determination and the educator must provide appropriate accommodations to enhance the student's performance.

Parents must realize that they are their students best support and advocate at home, as well as, in school. Parents need to be **empowered** to actively and assertively participate in their student's educational progress. **Trust your intuition.** If you feel that there are no problems with yourchild's learning ability or environment, you are probably right. Inconsistency in different areas of academic performance and behavioral changes demonstrated in the classroom are notable clues that your student may need special attention. Do not hesitate to demand an educational assessment for your student.

Personally speaking, I do not approve English as a Second Language classes for students with learning disabilities who speak Black American English (BAE) or any student who speaks BAE. BAE is a legitimate American Creole and it is not necessary to remediate students who speak it or, place them in a class to learn Standard American English (a language which they are submerged in daily). I do not believe it is necessary to protect or accommodate any student who speaks BAE under the American with Disabilities Act because it is not a disability, but rather an ability to communicate within a facet of Black American culture. I would strongly discourage additional labeling for learning disabled students as it only serves to further hinder the students' progress and assault their self esteem. Do not allow the educational system, or any other representative system, to label a student as "hyperactive", "troubled" or "slow learner" without demanding accountability and validation of that diagnosis through assessment. If problems are discovered, both parents and students should work together to find an educational environment and other resources to develop a vital plan of intervention.

Learning my left hand from my right hand was no easy task. I thought I would never learn my times tables and that I would die before I ever got the hang of Algebra. In fact, I still have no idea how I got through my SAT and college entrance exams. Now I'm just five quarters away from my undergraduate degree in Journalism and I'm still amazed at that. All the afore mentioned accomplishments took a lot of hard work and I still have problems with some of them. I know that I couldn't have come as far as I have without a lot of

support from my mother, grandparents, and some very patient educators. My advice to all my fellow students with learning disabilities is **do not give up**, do not be afraid to challenge yourselves, take your time and success will come.

4.

Cognitive And Affective Assessment Of African American Students: Perspectives Of A School Psychologist

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The question of how to accurately assess the cognitive abilities of African American students has been a continuing area of interest. Within the past few decades, these issues have become a focus of concern for many educators, researchers, psychologists, and the general public. Much of this concern revolves around the appropriateness of the use of intelligence tests when assessing African American and other minority students suspected of mental retardation (Reynolds, C. R., Gutkin, T. B., Elliott, S. N., and Witt, J. C., 1984). According to Reynolds, et al, (1984), the Association of Black Psychologists adopted a policy statement at its 1969 annual meeting to address its objections to the use of psychoeducational tests with minority students. These concerns included issues of inappropriate test content, inadequate representation of minorities in the standardization samples, examiner and language bias (i.e., Caucasian examiners may intimidate the subject, and often cannot effectively communicate with minority students); inequitable social consequences (consequences of the evaluation are discouraging to the subject); measurement of different constructs (i.e., measuring the amount of Anglocentrism of the home); and differential predictive validity (failure to predict at an acceptable level any relevant criteria for minorities).

The recent uproar surrounding *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) contributed to a resurgence of interest in this area. The School Psychology Review devoted an issue to its discussion, while several commentaries were published in the National Association of School Psy-

chologists *Communique*. One criticism of this book concerns Herrnstein and Murray's choice of the instrument used as a measure of intelligence; the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), a shortened version of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Stone (1996) notes that both tests are considered primary measures of achievement. If such is the case, then the question arises as to whether the theories and results presented by Herrnstein and Murray are accurate. Other criticisms have included arguments regarding whether there is only one general concept of ability, *g* ; whether all standardized tests of academic aptitude or achievement are as accurate measures of *g* as intelligence tests; whether intelligence is stable over time; whether cognitive ability is inherited; and finally, the issue of test bias - not in test administration, but in the actual construction of tests (Richardson, 1995).

The increase in interest regarding these and other issues have caused many practitioners to take a second look at the way we assess African Americans in particular, and different minority groups in general. The literature is full of articles on bias in testing (Flaugher, 1978), sociocultural issues and implications, and gender differences; yet time constraints allow only a very small look at the wealth of information available. Readers are encouraged to further explore this topic and base their decisions on careful evaluation of all available information. However, one should keep in mind the importance of this issue and consider its impact on the primary person involved; the African American student.

Definitions of the Term Learning Disabilities

Hammill (1990), noted eleven different sets of diagnostic criteria for learning disabilities. Of those eleven, only four have been developedsince 1977 and are thought to be viable in today's practice; the U.S. Office of Education definition (1977), the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) definition (1988), the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) definition (1986), and the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD) definition (1987). According to Hammill (1990), the

NJCLD's criteria showed the best chance of becoming the consensus definition.

With the debate over what constitutes a learning disability combined with cultural bias issues, how can minority students be accurately assessed? Hawks (1996), noted that since learning disabilities are complex to diagnose, a comprehensive battery is needed to truly understand the individual as a whole and their psychological processes. Flanagan and McGrew (1996) presented a multi-battery approach to the cognitive assessment of any student. Recommendations for utilizing a comprehensive, cross-battery approach will be discussed later in this chapter.

Cultural Differences

Helms (1992) questioned the lack of studies of cultural equivalence in standardized ability testing. She concluded that, no matter what construct was being measured by standardized ability tests, it was doubtful that it constituted universal intelligence or general cognitive ability for all racial and ethnic groups in this country. The point was raised as to whether tests of ability take into account the differing cultural aspects of the population or whether they are based solely on EuroAmerican culture. If so, are such tests a true measure of ability for all individuals, or do they measure the amount of assimilation of the prevailing culture by the individual being evaluated?

Ross-Gordon (1996) noted evaluators need to understand linguistic and cultural differences that may impact on students' response style. Other social scientists have also questioned the impact of culture on standardized tests. Ogbu (1986) proposed that African-American performance on tests of ability are not a true reflection of intellectual ability or knowledge. He suggested that differences are a result of (a) Black subordination in a caste system; (b) generations of African Americans lacking the opportunity to engage in activities that promote cognitive attributes which facilitate school success and higher test performance; and (c) learned response style; African

Americans may perceive and respond to intelligence tests differently.

Bernal (1984a, b) developed and tested the hypothesis that test bias occurred in the total testing experience, that is, the entire ambience. Minorities scored higher on standardized tests under facilitated administrations - subjects matched by race or ethnicity with an examiner of the same background, similar language style used to develop rapport, practice items given with feedback, and small group administration. Jensen (1984) noted some statistical difficulties with Bernal's experiment. Bernal responded and modified his prior ambience hypothesis, but stated that data demonstrating hereditary differences in *g* may be more amenable to environmental effects than previously believed, and that tests may not be as cross-culturally applicable as presumed.

Jensen (1989), Herrnstein and Murray (1994), and others reported that there is a large amount of past and current research which concludes that IQ differences are not due to tests or cultural biases, but are genetic or hereditary in nature. Many have reported IQ differences of 15 points, approximately one standard deviation, between the scores of Caucasians and African Americans. Jensen stated:

The observed mean differences in test scores between various groups are generally not an artifact of the tests themselves, but are attributable to factors that are casually independent of the tests . . . The present most widely used standardized tests can be used just as effectively for blacks as for whites in all of the usual applications of tests (1980, p. 740).

Nevertheless, test bias remains a concern.

Intelligence Defined

Another question arises regarding the actual definition of the term *intelligence*. Miller-Jones (1989) noted that a fundamental problem of ability tests is that there is confusion regarding the actual definition of intellectual ability. According to Weinberg (1989), all

cultures and societies acknowledge individual differences and value the use of intelligent behavior. Yet, the question of how that behavior can be measured is as varied as the individuals who seek to explain it. In reference to standardized intelligence tests, Miller-Jones proposed that we do not know which skill is being assessed by any particular set of items of subtests; there is neither a logical nor an intellectual distinction between acceptable and unacceptable responses. Lyon (1994) noted that, in order to effectively interpret data, both the broader social and environmental contexts and the measurements setting must be seen as having significant influence on test performance.

Options for Assessing Ability

Much literature is available to support the many positions regarding why significant differences exist in the intelligence scores of African Americans and Caucasians. Researchers have suggested options for dealing with these differences in the assessment of cognitive ability. For example, Helms (1992) proposed the following research ideas to further assessment options. They include: (a) the development and use of measures to determine interracial group cultural dependence, level of acculturation and Afrocentricity, and level of assimilation implied by thecontent of items, (b) modification of current test content that will reflect cultural diversity, (c) exploration of incorrect answers by talking with examinees, (d) use of other modes of assessment, (e) study of the environmental content of criteria, and (f) use of separate racial group norms if no culturally equivalent tests are available.

As practitioners, we strive to provide the most comprehensive, standardized assessment for all students. Relevant points to consider when assessing African American students' cognitive and affective ability are highlighted below.

Review the Referral

When completing a comprehensive assessment, one should

strive to answer the referral questions. In order to do this, a review of the referral is a necessity - not a review done while waiting for the student to arrive in the room, but a thorough review completed beforehand. Upon reviewing the referral packet, it is prudent to ask the question: What is the reason for the referral? What question or questions will the completed evaluation answer? One thought to consider is whether the referral was made in order to "get the kid out of my classroom." Other questions to consider include: Is the student experiencing academic problems that indicate a specific learning disability, and, what are the student's strengths and weaknesses? As the examiner, ask yourself these questions, then ask the referring teacher those same questions. During this time, it is also beneficial to begin to think about other aspects of the assessment, such as what instruments might best be used to get the information needed.

The Structured Interview

A structured interview with the student will afford the opportunity of getting the student's perspective on the referral and any problems the student identifies. It also will allow the examiner to obtain an informal language sample and gather reliable and relevant information. According to Sattler (1988), the interview may also provide insight into the student's personality, lifestyle, and temperament. If possible, it is helpful to interview significant others (parents, guardians, etc.) involved with the student to get a thorough history. Interviewing others can provide insight into the student's familial interactions and culture, principal language of the home, and how the student interacts with authority figures of his/her own race. During the interview, questions or concerns of the student or family can be addressed and misunderstandings or misinformation about the evaluation clarified.

The interview serves as a means of establishing rapport. If there are cultural mannerisms (i.e., not making direct eye contact with an adult) that may impact the student's interactions with adults, such cultural issues can be addressed openly during this time. An informal language assessment is important; is slang or "Black En-

glish" used by the student? As the examiner, do you understand how the student is expressing him/herself? Do they understand you? For example, during a recent evaluation of an African American college student, I observed her interactions with other members of the evaluation team. When she made an error or wanted to change a response, she very politely stated, "Oh excuse me, I meant to say . . ." This language and behavior was noted with all other examiners (who were white). When I tested her later in the afternoon, however, a very different response was given. On her first error, the student responded, "Oh, my bad; it's . . ." This young woman obviously expected me to understand her terminology and know that the correct answer was forthcoming. Having talked with her previously and being the same race as she put her at ease so that she felt comfortable enough to use slang when expressing herself. An interview can promote this type of rapport between the examiner
and the student thereby directing the testing session into a more comfortable and less threatening situation. Positive rapport also encourages maximum effort on the part of the student.

Observations of the Student

An observation of the student across different settings as well as a structured interview with the student and significant others, when possible, are a necessary part of the assessment process. This observation will help illustrate the student's interactions with peers, the referring teacher, and others in positions of authority. It will indicate how he/she approaches different tasks. Such an observation may give a clearer, more unbiased view of the student than what has been reported in the referral. There may be personality conflicts or cultural issues involved that go undetected without the opportunity of personal observation. Completing a personal observation may eliminate preconceived notions that have developed from listening to or reading the teacher's comments. An observation will provide a glimpse into reported behavioral issues, such as not making eye contact with an adult, or talking with the hands or other body parts which may be cultural nuances. Before evaluating the student, we may also wish to examine our own assumptions about culture or ethnicity.

These issues should be addressed prior to working with any student.

Selection of Instruments

When looking at the referral question, optimally, we should determine which instruments will provide the best estimate of the student's potentials and underlying deficits. The evaluation battery should include not only an intelligence test, but also other measures of cognitive processing, achievement, language, and social-emotional functioning. Choose instruments that are reliable and valid, and are the most appropriate for the area or concept to be measured. The tests should be normed on a representative population similar to that of the student - age, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. The standardization sample should include an adequate representation of African Americans. Most instruments report to have included a representation of many ethnicities but it is important to determine if there is an adequate number of African Americans in the sample. If a test is used that does not provide a breakdown by ethnicity, use additional measures to provide increased confidence in test results (Gordon, 1996). Perhaps another measure has a stronger sample size, and would be less culturally loaded.

Throughout the evaluation, try not to be driven by the concept of time. If the testing battery is chosen carefully and a decision is made not to investigate further because it will require longer to give one test as opposed to another, stop and think: What if this were my child? His or her academic future is dependent on this evaluation - how accurate a picture is being presented given the data collected?

Give Multiple Measures of Ability

The Wechsler (1981) scales provide a measure of *g*, general intelligence, but there are many different theories about the nature of cognitive processes underlying intelligence. Available theories regarding intelligence include theories by Carroll, Gardner, Thurstone, Guilford, Horn, Cattell, Spearman, and Sternberg (Resnick, 1976;

Sternberg & Berg, 1992). With so many different theories, how can we as practitioners, feel comfortable basing placement decisions on limited measures of ability?

McGrew (in press) has completed a classification of major intelligence tests using the Gf-Gc factors, and concluded, as has Carroll (1993), that most test batteries used singularly provide an incomplete measure of the major domains of cognitive ability. Flanagan and McGrew (in press) propose the use of several test batteries in order to assess and interpret cognitive abilities. Flanagan and McGrew provide information that can be readily adapted for use in a school setting. The cost of utilizing this approach is that it adds only to the time spent completing an assessment. However, so much additional information is gained about how the student processes information that it is well worth the additional time. When outside documentation for students seeking accommodations in college is reviewed, it is interesting to see evaluations that identify a deficit in achievement, but do not discuss processing areas. On occasion, significant differences in scores on the Wechsler (1981) scales are notmentioned. There are no attempts made to explain changes in subtest or IQ scores. Strengths and weaknesses are not addressed, and the student has no clue as to why they received services in the secondary educational setting. In order to discuss processing deficits, multiple measures of assessment must be given to look at cognitive processing ability. Some of the processing areas that are generally discussed include: **Auditory Processing** - closure, discrimination, memory, synthesis, and sound/symbol association. **Visual Processing** - closure, discrimination, motor integration, and synthesis. **Reasoning** - fluid, nonverbal, quantitative, sequential, simultaneous, and verbal (Hawks, 1996). Identified strengths in areas of cognitive processing can then be used to aid the student with his or her weaker areas.

Probing

To probe or not to probe? This is always an issue when assessing any student, and may become more of one when working

with an African American student who uses non-standard English. As a rule, examiners are taught to follow manuals exactly; yet, if a student gives a borderline response, how can it be scored if there is no clarification of the response? Flexibility is required in the use of test instruments by probing unclear responses. The WAIS-R (1981) manual states: "In general, if the subject's meaning is not clear, it is the examiner's responsibility to probe with a neutral statement or question . . . (p. 54)." If the student gets the impression that his or her first answer was incorrect, that misconception should be corrected with the explanation that more detail is needed. After a subtest is finished, asking the student how they went about completing the tasks or having them explain an unusual response will also give insight about the way information is processed. For example, did they actually have a grasp of how to complete the task, or was their response a guess? If their response indicates little understanding of what was required of them, that information is beneficial in determining if an accurate picture of the student's ability was obtained. If not, it is necessary to look at other measures that will tap into the student's ability.

Rewording test items later will also shed light on any language problems. Administering another, less verbally loaded test or a nonverbal measure will help justify the rationale in explaining why other, more traditional measures do no result in a valid measure of the student's ability. Armour-Thomas (1992) recommends more focused probing of responses, giving the subject some type of feedback, and providing opportunities for response clarification and justification in testing situations if sociolinguistic patterns are problematic and impact on the student's performance.

Analysis of Results

After testing, what does the examiner do with the information gathered? When examining test results, the examiner needs to consider if sociolinguistic patterns, cultural differences, and behavior are significantly affecting scores. Does the examiner need to

give additional measures to assess cognitive ability? What strengths and weaknesses are seen? Do processing deficits impact on a logical achievement area? Try NOT to look at Verbal-Performance splits and/or ability/achievement discrepancies alone. If such scores are not adequately understood by the examiner, chances are parents will be even more confused. Use the student's strengths as a means of recommending strategies for improving their weaknesses. In order to provide comprehensive standardized assessments for individuals with learning problems and to suggest recommendations on how best to maximize the student's functioning in order to make curricula accessible, cognitive processing strengths and deficits should be identified and discussed. When a learning disability is diagnosed, the processing deficit should logically impact on an area of achievement. For example, one would not normally suspect a significant impact of a fine motor deficit on a reading disability. Thus, the processing deficit should represent a logical basis for explaining the achievement deficit. At times the data may not "fit" with your original hypothesis about the student. It may be necessary to go back and give additional measures to test out your theory, or to support or dispute the first set of testing data.

The Assessment Report

After all the information is gathered and analyzed, it is time to integrate it into the assessment report. Thomas-Wilson (1996) suggested that specific remediation strategies that address cultural nuances, strengths and weaknesses, and culturally sensitive remediation strategies be included in the report. A thorough discussion of strengths, weaknesses, and identification of processing deficits and their impact on achievement are important. Use the strengths to help give suggestions to remediate the weaker areas. Give the student strategies that are relevant to their particular situation. Recommendations for career counseling are always helpful, as many arrive at college with ideas of majoring in fields where their learning disabilities impact the greatest. It becomes hard for some students to hear that a degree in a specific field may be very difficult to obtain. Help the student and parents set realistic goals by explaining how the

disability may impact on a particular career or job, then provide options for consideration.

The Feedback Session

As with the report, try to explain strengths and weaknesses to the parents and/or student during the feedback session or staffing. Relating deficits to everyday life functioning may be helpful in explaining problems to students and parents. Try to answer questions that the student may have regarding the disability. Encourage them to become their own advocate, learn more about learning disabilities, and know their own strengths and weaknesses. It is important for students to understand how their strengths and weaknesses impact on school performance in specific areas. Provide information about support groups, books, videos, outside agencies, etc. that will help the student and significant others understand the disability and its impact on their everyday lives.

Summary

In order to provide an accurate cognitive assessment of African American adolescents and adults, issues of different forms of bias have always been of concern. Assessors are encouraged to consider theelement of cultural differences. In order to assist in an accurate assessment, professionals should review referral forms, conduct structured interviews, observe students in classroom and social settings, carefully select testing measures, and consider probing for additional information. As practitioners, our goal is to assure the assessment and diagnosis of African American students in the most appropriate manner available to provide an accurate assessment of cognitive abilities.

Tips for Assessing the African American Student

1. Review the referral.
2. Conduct a structured interview.
3. Observe the student across settings.
4. Develop hypotheses based on referral and gathered information.
5. Determine the evaluation battery.
6. Allot sufficient time for building rapport, probing if a response is unclear.
7. If the student's responses are "unusual," ask how they arrived at their answer after the subtest is completed. You may need to reword the question to see if the student can give an appropriate response (for clinical use only).
8. If deficits in language have a severe impact on the student's performance, consider giving another, less verbally loaded measure to demonstrate the student's true potential.
9. Give multiple measures of cognitive processing.
10. Analyze the data using all facts gathered. Are your hypotheses true or false? Are additional measures needed to answer the question? What are the student's strengths and weaknesses?
11. Are processing deficits impacting on a logical achievement area?
12. Develop strategies based on the student's strengths to remediate their weaknesses.

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5.

Linguistic Bias In The Assessment Of African Americans With Learning Disabilities

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African American English (AAE) is viewed as a distinct language determined by the social and economic community in which many African Americans live and reflects cultural differences in the way African Americans interact with their environment (Dandy, 1991; Hale-Benson, 1982; Smitherman-Donaldson, 1994). AAE is not simply a means of communicating but a prime source of cultural identity. It is also a cognitive structuring of the world, which is linked to one's world-view, identity, self-concept, and self-esteem. Educators commonly confuse Standard English with language and intellect. Standard English skills and thinking skills were, and in large measures still are, seen as synonymous (Gail, 1983; Jones, 1988; Seymour, Champion, & Jackson, 1995). African Americans have been made to feel inferior, alienated, disoriented, and rejected, simply by virtue of the attitude which is expressed by the majority culture about the natural language of African Americans (Gail, 1983; Hilliard, 1983; Jones, 1988).

In the majority culture, nonstandard English refers to dialects that differ from English patterns considered standard. Whereas Spanish, Chinese, and other American dialects are clearly different languages and share some features of African American English, AAE use, as a dialect of standard English, continues to receive lower acceptance as a different language (Dandy, 1991; Kizza, 1991; Roberts, 1976; Wolfram & Fasold, 1974). Due in part to the historical and current socio-political dynamicswithin the United States, AAE is considered a nonstandard variety of English. African Americans

have been held in low esteem in the United States, and therefore, their dialect has been held in low esteem as well. The stigma carried by AAE is an indication of how greatly misunderstood it is by the general public. The nature of this misunderstanding stems from the misperception that there is something wrong with the way so many African Americans speak and for this reason, it is viewed as substandard, a problem requiring a fix (Hilliard, 1983; Roberts, 1976). However, linguistic scholarship exists that affirms the legitimacy and linguistic integrity of AAE and rejects the notion of substandardness (Dandy, 1991; Gail, 1983; Roberts, 1976; Roseberry-McKibbin, 1994; Seymour & Bland, 1991; Seymour et al., 1995).

African American English

AAE is a language born from a culture of struggle, a way of talking that stems from the survival of African language elements. The uniqueness of AAE is evident in three areas: (1) patterns of grammar and pronunciation, many of which reflect the patterns that operate in West African languages (i.e., many West African languages do not have the English /th/ sound, and in AAE, /th/ is rendered with the next closest sound, such as a /d/, /t/, or an /f/); (2) verbal rituals from the "Oral Tradition" and the continued importance of the "Word", as in African cultures; and (3) lexicon, or vocabulary, usually developed by giving special meanings to regular English words, a practice that goes back to enslavement and the need for a system of communication that only those in the enslaved community could understand (Holloway, 1991; Wolfram & Fasold, 1974).

Some patterns of AAE (Appendix A) include such grammatical features as the omission of both /t/ and /d/ in final position of words in which the /-ed/ suffix was used to denote the past tense or past participle (i.e., "He played with me yesterday" would become "He play with me yesterday."). In AAE, "to be" assumes a relatively fixed position and occurs as a main verb in a variety of contexts (i.e., He be going. They be going.). Other grammatical features common to AAE are the expression of negation, the deletion of /-s/ suffix

plural markers, and the deletion ofthird person singular forms of "have" and "do". Typical phonological features of AAE include the deletion of final consonants of a consonant cluster in words, both /r/ and /l/ may be absent in the pronunciation of many words, and the final /g/ in the /-ing/ suffix may also be omitted (Bartel, Grill, & Bryen, 1973; Bountress, 1994; CSHA, 1994; Wolfram & Fasold, 1974).

The African American Oral Tradition is rooted in a belief in the power of the Word. To speak is to make something come into being. Once something is given the force of speech, it is binding. This does not mean that the African American tradition is to discount the written word. However, it is a strong indication that African Americans have a strong cultural tradition of the spoken word and communicate successfully in that modality (Smitherman-Donaldson, 1994). In this strong oral tradition, the Black Church has been the single most significant force in nurturing the surviving African language and cultural traditions of African Americans. Over the centuries, the church has stood as a rich reservoir of terms and expressions in AAE. "Straight outa the church" have come expressions like "on time", to acknowledge that something occurred at the appropriate psychological moment, "Brotha/Sista", as generic terms for an African American, and proverbs such as "God don't like ugly" and "what go round come round". Such expressions are as common in the language of the African American culture as idiomatic expressions are in the language of the Euro-American culture. Dialectal patterns of AAE incorporate a consistent and fully developed linguistic system with predictable rules and is the result of natural dialectal patterns that should not be described as either deficient or abnormal (Roberts, 1976; Smitherman-Donaldson, 1994).

Learning Disabilities and Speech/Language Disorders

Research indicates that minorities, especially African Americans and Hispanics, are overrepresented in the categories of learning disabilities and speech/language disorders (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Fitts, 1991). This overrepresentation is due, in part, to inappropriate

assessment procedures. Sociocultural factors, such as the use of AAE, have a major impact on intellectual assessments, measurements of socioemotional adjustment, and achievement in the evaluation of learning disabilities among African Americans. The use of standardized instruments to assess the language of African Americans has been a point of controversy, centered largely around the deficit-versus-difference issue of AAE use. The criterion employed by formal tests is that of Standard English. These tests tend not to allow for differences based on cultural language patterns, and therefore, penalize language-different individuals, such as AAE speakers. Traditional standardized assessment results in labeling many African Americans as language deficient when they should be described more accurately as language-different. This may result in the disproportionate placement of African Americans into remedial and special programs (Cartledge, Stupay, & Kaczala, 1988).

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (Asha), no dialectal variety of English is a disorder or a pathological form of speech or language (Asha, 1982a). Each social dialect is adequate as a functional and effective variety of English. However, dialect speakers may have linguistic disorders within their dialect. An essential step toward making accurate assessments of communicative disorders is to distinguish between those aspects of linguistic variation that represent the diversity of the English language from those that represent speech, language, and hearing disorders (Asha, 1983b; CSHA, 1994; Roseberry-McKibbin, 1994). The examiner must have certain competencies to distinguish between dialectal differences and communicative disorders. Competency in the ability to recognize and identify characteristics of AAE has become an integral part of the training programs and service provision for Speech and Language pathologists (Roseberry-McKibbin, 1994).

Training and Assessment

Necessary competencies in speech-language assessments of African Americans include recognition of the particular dialect as a

valid language system, knowledge of the phonological and grammatical features of the dialect, and knowledge of nondiscriminatory testing procedures (Asha, 1983a). Provision of services requires sensitivity and competency in the (1) linguistic features of the dialect, (2) ability to distinguish between dialectal features and standard English features, and (3) effects of attitudes toward dialects as well as a thorough understanding and appreciation for the community and culture of the nonstandard English speaker (Asha, 1983b).

In addition to cultural sensitivity and competency, examiners should be creative in the assessment process of African Americans utilizing more than the typical standardized process of African Americans, utilizing more than the typical standardized assessment instruments. The primary, and most essential, component in a speech-language assessment of a nonstandard English speaker is a language sample of the examinee as well as the family of origin. This provides the examiner a baseline of the examinee's language competency and a history of his or her dialectal form of English. A language sample also provides valuable information useful in the interpretation of more standardized assessment results (Adger, 1993; Roseberry-McKibbin, 1994). The majority of standardized tests are not effective for determining an AAE speaker's speech-language competence (Jones, 1988). Therefore, alternative assessment procedures must be used in the evaluation process. Possible alternatives include curriculum-based assessment, dynamic (naturalistic) assessment, and portfolio assessment. Once the difference/disorder distinctions have been made, services can be provided to treat only those features or characteristics that are true errors and not attributable to the dialect. The treatment approach must be functional and based on context-specific appropriateness to the dialect (Cartledge, et al., 1988).

While a more effective assessment process may improve the accuracy in identifying nonstandard English speakers with true communicative disorders, there may be nonstandard English speakers who find it advantageous to have access to the use of standard English. Standard English is the linguistic variety used by government, the mass media, business, education, science, and the arts. English-

as-a-second-language (ESL) instruction has been suggested as a viable strategy in providing AAE speakers access to standard English and higher levels of functioning and achievement in the mainstream of society (Franklin, 1992; Jones, 1988; Roseberry-McKibbin, 1994).

Summary

Individuals who speak, read, and write in nonstandard English must not be labeled as pathological or in need of services. The clinicians' awareness of the cultural differences and knowledge of the specific variations involved in the dialects used by language-different populations are important factors in conducting culturally sensitive evaluations. The ability to differentiate dialect differences from disorders as well as treat only those features that are true errors and not attributable to the dialect are also important in the evaluation process of language-different populations. However, it is still necessary to identify those individuals who depart markedly from the dialectal patterns of their own culture, identifying those whose communication is impaired by an articulation or language disorder. The professional's understanding of the validity of language differences, knowledge of the linguistic features that contribute to those differences with respect to standard English, and their skill in developing instructional strategies are important to the success of a language-different individual. Since standard English is the linguistically idealized archetype, it is essential that African American children, as well as other language-different populations, be well versed and competent in the use of standard English. However, the acknowledged need for African Americans to become highly competent in common [standard]English is in no way an excuse to degrade the language and experience of the African American community.

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APPENDIX A
Characteristics of African American English (AAE)

*AAE Features	Examples
Phonology	
1. **Reduction of final consonant of a consonant cluster**	
a. When both consonants of a cluster belong to the same word (usually applies when both members of the cluster are either voiced or voiceless).	a. best => bes; band =>ban; went => wen; left => leff; past => pas.
b. When past tense (-ed) is added to a word.	b. robbed => rob; kissed => kis; aimed => aim; passed => pass
c. When a word beginning with a vowel follows a word with a final consonant cluster.	c. best apple => bes apple
2. **Production of voiced and voiceless /th/**	
a. The voiced /th/ may be pronounced as [d] when in the initial position of a word.	a. this => dis
b. The voiceless /th/ may be produced as a [t].	b. thin => tin
3. **Production of /r/ and /l/**	
a. The /r/ and /l/ may be substituted by an unstressed schwa.	a. sister => sistuh; steal => steauh
b. The /r/ and /l/ may be omitted when they precede a consonant in a word.	b. horse => ho's; salt => sought
c. The /r/ and /l/ may be omitted when they follow and /o/ or /u/.	c. carol => ca'ol; saul => saw
4. **Devoicing a final /b/, /d/, and /g/**	
a. In word-final positions /b/, /d/, and /g/ may be produced as [p], [t], and [k].	a. beg => bek; lid => lit; grab => grap
5. **Vowel glide production**	
a. Vowels that precede a voiceless consonant may be produced with a glide.	a. kite => k::::ite; flight => fl::::ight
6. **Nasalization**	
a. The final nasal consonant in the word-final position may be deleted, but the preceding vowels sounds may have a nasalized quality.	a. nasalization of vowels preceding nasals produce homophones in words such as rum, run, and rung.
b. Substitution of /i/ for /e/ before a nasal.	b. pen => pin; when => with

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APPENDIX A, (continued)

Characteristics of African American English (AAE)

*AAE Features	Examples
Syntax	
1. **Deletion of {-ed} suffix.** Because of the consonant rule discussed under phonology, the {-ed} marking for past tense, past participant forms, and derived adjectives is affected.	They *talked* yesterday. => They *talk* yesterday. He has *finished* the job.=> He has *finish* the job.
2. **The regularization of irregular verbs.** The {-ed} marker may be added to the present tense form of verbs that should have anirregular past tense.	He *ran* home. => He *runned* home.
3. **Deletion of forms of *have*.** The auxiliary *have* may be contracted to form *'ve* and *'s*; however, in AAE these contractions may be deleted in the present tense.	*She's* done well. => *She* done well. *They've* gotten together. => *They* gotten together.
4. **Deletion of {-s} suffix in third person subject-verb agreement.** The {-s} suffix marker may be deleted in the present tense of verbs when the subject of those verbs is in the third person singular.	He *bakes* a cake. => He *bake* a cake.
5. **Deletion of third person singular forms of *have* and *do*.** In standard English *have* and *do* become *has* and *does* in third person singular subject constructions. This change may not take place in AAE.	He *has* two coins. => He *have* two coins. She *does* many tricks. => She *do* many tricks.
6. **Deletion of {-s} suffix plural marker.** When nouns are classified by a plural quantifier, the {-s} plural marker may be deleted.	The boy has 50 *cents*. => The boy has 50 *cent*. The girl has 3 *birds* => The girl has 3 *bird*.
7. **Deletion of {-s} suffix possessive marker.** The {-s} marker may be deleted in possessive word relations.	*John's* cousin => *John* cousin *Mary's* hat => *Mary* hat

APPENDIX A, (continued)

Characteristics of African American English (AAE)

*AAE Features	Examples
8. **Deletion of *is* and *are* when *gonna* is used.** *Is* and *are* may be deleted when they are followed by *gonna*.	He *is gonna* go fishing => He *gonna* go fishing.
9. **Invariant be form of the verb *to be*.** The form be may be used as a main verb and can refer to either habitual or intermittent action as opposed to a single event..	He *is* working. => He *be* working.
10. **Multiple negation.** Negation is expressed in several ways in AAE: a. The addition of two negatives to an auxiliary. b. Two negatives added in converting an indefinite a negativeform. c. Two negatives added to *did*.	a. I *can't* go. => I *can't never* go. b. I *am* somebody. => I *am not nobody* . (I *ain't nobody*). c. I *did not* do anything => I *ain't* to *did nothing*.

Syntactical Differences

Feature	Standard English	AAE
Linking Verb	He is going.	He goin' or he goin?
Subject Expression	John lives in N.Y.	John, he live in N.Y.
Verb Form	I drank the milk.	I drunk the milk.
Verb Agreement	He runs home.	He run home or He be running home.
Future Form	I will go home.	I'ma go home.
IF' Construction	I asked if he did it.	I asked did he do it.
Negation	I don't have any.	I don't got none.
Indefinite article	I want an apple.	I want a apple.
Pronoun form	We have to do it.	Us got to do it.
Preposition	He is over at his friend's house.	He over to his friend house.
Copula ("be")	He is here all the time.	He be her
No, he isn't.	No, he don't	

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APPENDIX A (continued)

Feature	Standard English	AAE
Third Person Singular	She works hard. He has a bike.	She work hard. He have a bike.

Adapted from:

Bartel, N. R., Grill, J. J., and Bryen, D. N. (1973). Language characteristics of Black Children: Implications for assessment. Journal of School Psychology, 11(4), 351-364.

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6.

Portfolio And Dynamic Assessment
An Authentic Look At Individual Differences

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As part of a current trend to improve education for African American students, professionals are eager to develop viable alternatives for assessing African American students (Hilliard, 1995; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994; Midgette, 1995). Portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures are two such promising alternatives. These assessment procedures have the potential of providing valuable information concerning African American students' performance in educational settings. Portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures are also designed to eliminate bias against cultural differences which has unduly impacted African American students (Hilliard, 1995; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994; Midgette, 1995; Patton & Baytops, 1995). Information gathered from portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures, coupled with information gathered from standardized assessment measures, can better equip students, parents, and professionals in making informed decisions regarding educational goals and instructional objectives (Aseltine, 1993; Bolig & Day, 1993; Coleman, 1994; Gilman & McDermott, 1994; Hoy & Gregg, 1994). Portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures can also provide a showcase of African American students' abilities, talents, interests, and potential.

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the specific use of portfolio collections and dynamic assessment as tools for authentically assessingAfrican American students. This discussion will provide (1) information concerning the theoretical foundations for these assessment procedures, (2) a description of how these procedures can be used in conjunction with or as alternatives to traditional forms of standardized assessment, and (3) a list of the

advantages to using portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures.

Theoretical Foundations

Portfolio assessment. Standardized assessment measures and procedures have often been criticized as being culturally biased. This bias stems from the failure of standardized assessment procedures to take into account individual differences stemming from culturally diverse backgrounds (Hilliard, 1995; Hoy & Gregg, 1994; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994; Midgette, 1995). This criticism has led to the rethinking and reforming of assessment procedures for African American students (Bolig & Day, 1993; Cizek, 1993; Coleman, 1994; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994; Patton & Baytops, 1995; Worthen, 1993). At the forefront of this reform is the development of alternative assessment procedures which provide authentic information about students' performance over time, tasks, and in a variety of learning environments. Authentic assessment provides an opportunity for African American students to demonstrate, through a variety of products, the knowledge or skills obtained in the learning process (Feuer & Fulton, 1993; Madeus & Kelleghan, 1993). These products can reflect students' and teachers' decisions concerning best performance and can relate to real life situations outside of the school environment (Worthen, 1993). Student portfolios provide educators with a collection of products that can be used to evaluate and to document student performance over time, tasks, and in authentic settings (Wolf, 1991).

Portfolio assessment is also linked to learning theory (Gilman & McDermott, 1994) as it provides students with an opportunity to reflect on the products in the portfolio and gives evidence of actual student performance. Information gleaned from portfolios can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and student performance, as well as todevelop instructional goals and objectives based on documentation provided by the student in the portfolio (Aseltine, 1993; Gilman & McDermott, 1994; Madaus & Kelleghan, 1993). This direct link with instruction is of tremendous value both for teachers and African American students en-

gaged in the learning process. Theoretically, then, portfolio collections provide authentic measures of student performance which is tied to learning by helping guide the planning of instruction.

Dynamic assessment. Dynamic assessment is theoretically based on the work of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (Bolig & Day, 1993; Hoy & Gregg, 1994; Lidz, 1991). His assessment theory posits that standardized assessment measures provide evidence of what students already know and not what they may be capable of knowing, and therefore, is static in nature (Bolig 7 Day, 1993). Counter to this, is Vygotsky's (1962) perspective that of far greater importance is the "dynamics of intellectual progress" (p. 103). Vygotsky demonstrated, by providing students with some kind of assistance or instruction during the assessment process, evaluators could get valuable information concerning the potential an individual has for learning (Hoy & Gregg, 1994; Lidz, 1991).

It should be noted that dynamic assessment, like portfolio assessment, provides an authentic measure of student performance. The intervention used in the assessment process is reflective of instructional practices or strategies used in classroom settings. Dynamic assessment presents African American students with an opportunity to demonstrate individual strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. This assessment procedure gives educators and/or evaluators information concerning student responsiveness to specific instructional strategies. This information has direct implications for developing instruction best suited to meet the individual needs of African American students.

Uses of Portfolio Assessment

A review of the literature provides information as to the diversity and applicability of portfolio assessment across curriculum areas and for varying educational assessment purposes. More importantly, examples provided in the literature indicate that portfolio assessment provides anauthentic representation of an

individual's performance over time, tasks, and environments and can be the link to developing appropriate instruction and intervention (Abruscato, 1993; Bauer, 1993; Coleman, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Gilmore & McDermott, 1994; Hoy & Gregg, 1994; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994). Of primary consideration is the development of guidelines for how the portfolio will be designed and used for evaluation. Gilmore & McDermott (1994) provide a series of questions to be considered when developing a portfolio collection. Those questions generate the following information about the development of portfolios:

1. Contents of the portfolio may be specific to a particular area of the curriculum or contain representative samples of all areas of student achievement.

2. The collection may contain best works only or be a representative sample of the kinds of work the student has done.

3. Portfolio collections can be guided by a state education agency, a local school system, individual schools, or by individual teachers.

4. Portfolio evaluation plans can include teacher input or be administratively determined. A portfolio collection lends itself to collaboration between students, teachers, parents, and school administrators.

5. Contents of the portfolio may be evaluated differently according to the purpose of the collection.

6. Students may be permitted an opportunity to improve upon the contents of the portfolio as they engage in the evaluation of their own work.

7. Portfolios may be the property of the student, of the school, or both.

8. Portfolios could replace report cards as a more comprehensive and more valid evaluation of students.

9. Technology can aid in enhancing collections with audio and/or video tapes of student performance. Computer-based programs can aid in organizing and making collections more easily managed.

An often cited example of the use of portfolio collections for the purpose of assessment is the Vermont Portfolio Project (Abruscato, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Gilman & McDermott, 1994; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994). This state-wide project was initiated to provide teachers with more authentic information about student performance. The project was piloted with students in grades four and eight in the areas of writing and math. Specific guidelines developed by state education officials were used to determine the contents of the collection and criteria for evaluation. Researchers, school administrators, teachers, and parents are hopeful that the use of portfolio assessment will be a successful, viable alternative to using standardized assessment procedures in Vermont (Abruscato, 1993).

Another example of the use of portfolio assessment is seen in a pilot project entitled: Early Assessment for Exceptional Potential of Young Minority and/or Economically Disadvantaged Students (EAEP). EAEP used a portfolio assessment model designed to identify and develop instructional plans for children in kindergarten through third grade (Coleman, 1993). Early results from this project indicated success in terms of increased teacher understanding of individual student's needs and improved instructional techniques which took into account individual differences. Teachers expressed a sense of empowerment in being able to moreaccurately identify children's potential through direct observation (Coleman, 1994).

Uses of Dynamic Assessment

Most dynamic assessment models use a test-intervene-retest format (Lidz, 1991). The focus of the assessment is on learner or student modifiability (Lidz, 1991) which involves careful observation of the intervention technique used and the student's response to the intervention. The goal of dynamic assessment is for the student to increase the use of appropriate strategies for problem-solving demonstrated during retesting. The theory behind dynamic assessment is that the process of learning is as important as the product of learning. A review of the literature reveals five models of dynamic assessment most often used in current practice by educators and evaluators (Bolig & Day, 1993; Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993; Lidz, 1991; Vygotsky, 1962).

1. Budoff's model (Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993; Lidz, 1991) uses a test train-test procedure. During the training stage, the evaluator familiarizes the student with the assessment tasks, provides cues or prompts on the appropriate strategies needed for the tasks, and provides feedback to the student on their responses. Standardized test assessment instruments are used for the testing stages.

2. Feuerstein developed an assessment model using the Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) to gain information about a student's potential to perform tasks related to cognitive functions (Bolig & Day, 1993; Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993; Lidz, 1991). Feuerstein's theory is that cognitive development is enhanced by interaction with the environment through learning experiences mediated by teachers or other adults (Bolig & Day, 1993; Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993). In this model, the evaluator provides the student with intervention strategies for completing cognitive-related tasks (i.e., memory tasks, visual-motor organization tasks) identified as deficit during initial testing. The student is then re-tested to determine the responsiveness to the intervention (Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993).

3. The testing-the-limits model is a procedure for applying vari ous modifications (i.e., feedback, clarification of directions, use of alternative response modes) to standardized tests. The evaluator notes the differences in performance on tasks as a result of modifications. This approach provides valuable information about how the student approaches learning tasks and what instructional strategies might be most useful in the classroom (Hoy & Gregg, 1994; Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993).

4. The graduated prompting procedure is a model that engages students in a learning task (i.e., reading or math activity) and provides cues or prompts to lead the student to correct responses. The cues or prompts are predetermined and sequen tially ordered from more to less explicit in nature. The goal is for the student to increase correct responses with fewer and less explicit prompts (Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993)

5. The final model is a continuum of assessment using both mediated and graduated prompting procedures. After initial assessment is completed, the evaluator provides instructional intervention strategies and uses graduated prompting in a learning experience (i.e., math or reading-related task). After retesting, differences in performance are noted in responses to the intervention and graduated prompting (Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993).

Advantages of Portfolio and Dynamic Assessment for African American Students

Portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures provide professionals with tools to assess the abilities, capabilities, and potential of African American students (Bauer, 1993; Bolig & Day, 1993; Coleman, 1994; Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1994; Jitendra & Kameenui, 1993). The concern about cultural bias in standardized testing has led to the overrepresentation of African American students in receiving special education services (McLoughlin &

Lewis, 1994; Midgette, 1995) and underrepresentation in being identified and placed in programs for the gifted (Bolig & Day, 1993; Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1994; Patton & Baytops, 1995). Portfolio and dynamic assessment offer an alternative to comparing an African American students' performance against "...largely white, middle-class values and attitudes" (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994). These assessment procedures provide a measure of a student's performance over time and tasks and with instructional intervention reflecting and encouraging cultural diversity in an effort to eliminate bias in the assessment of African American students.

Portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures also provide valuable information about the learning potential and preferred learning style of African American students. Both assessment procedures provide students with opportunities to demonstrate performance on a variety of tasks with varying instructional techniques specifically related to cognitive and academic development. Professionals can use this information to design appropriate, viable instruction for African American students.

Portfolio and dynamic assessment also provide valuable information to professionals for making decisions concerning educational placement of African American students. These assessment procedures can supplement information obtained from standardized assessment, thus providing a more holistic profile of individual students. Hopefully, this will lead to the realization that African American students are "...not categories of deficits, but products of diverse cultures which prepare them to be co-partners in their own learning" (Welch, 1995).

In summary, portfolio and dynamic assessment procedures have the potential of providing rich sources of authentic, direct measures of African American students' performance over time and tasks (portfolio collections) and with mediated assistance (dynamic procedures). The advantages of these procedures is in eliminating cultural bias, providing a direct link to instructional

planning, and aiding in the educational decision-making of African American students. In essence, these procedures provide an authentic look at individual differences which can enhance and improve education for African American students.

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7.

Collaboration, Consultation, And Cooperation: The "Whole Village" At Work

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General educators (e.g., counselors, psychologists, administrators, and service providers), special educators, and community leaders are continually challenged to respond to individual and collective growth (Gardner, 1993; Goodlad, 1993; Goodlad & Lovitt, 1993; Gould, 1981; Hamburg, 1990, 1991; Hobbs, 1975; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Obiakor, 1994; Obiakor & Algozzine, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1991, 1994; West, 1993). For African Americans with specific learning or behavior problems, this challenge for maximum growth has intensified in recent years (Algozzine & Obiakor, 1995; Anderson, 1993; Asante, 1990; Ford & Obiakor, 1995; Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995; Harry, 1992; Hilliard, 1992, 1995; Obiakor, 1992; Obiakor, Algozzine, & Ford, 1993, 1994; Obiakor, Patton, & Ford, 1992; Powell Hobson & Hobson, 1992).

Many years ago, the launching of Sputnik by the Russians threatened the sacred existence of the United States. To respond to this challenge, learned committees and learning communities (e.g., schools and universities) were urged to provide maximum opportunities for all students. Interestingly, educational and community leaders responded. Today, demographic changes in schools and committees pose a greater challenge than the launching of Sputnik. This challenge calls for multicultural collaboration, consultation, and cooperation at all educational and community levels. Apparently, for multiculturalpartnership to be infused, there must be

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powershifts and paradigm shifts in the traditional ways schools and communities collaborate, consult, and cooperate on issues related to African Americans. In this chapter, I address these phenomena and suggest collaborative principles for educators and service providers working with African Americans with learning problems.

Conceptual Frameworks

Collaboration, consultation, and cooperation are frequently used synonymously. According to Dettmer, Thurston and Dyck (1993), collaborating involves assisting or cooperating with others different from us. They explained that:

> One intriguing dictionary definition of collaborating is cooperating with the enemy. For educational purposes, the "enemy" might be viewed as the learning problem needing service, or the behavior requiring modification, or lack of tolerance toward a problem. Communication, cooperation, and coordination are vital aspects of the collaborative process. (p. 15)

Consultation reinforces understanding collaboration and partnership. Dettmer et al. (1993) defined consultation as "a council, conference, or formal deliberation" (p. 13). For instance, "school consultation is activity in which professional educators and parents collaborate within the school context by communicating, cooperating, and coordinating their efforts as a team to serve the learning and behavioral needs of students" (Dettmer et al., 1993, p. 14). A logical extension is that where there is consultation, there is mutual collaboration, cooperation, partnership, and team-work among multicultural community members and organizations.

Cooperation involves group building to achieve a common goal. It entails inclusive decision-making of all concerned parties. Dettmer et al. (1993) defined cooperation as "the act of uniting, banding, combining, concurring, or conjoining" (p. 14). In other words, it does

not ignore the "person" or individual accountability. It does, however, magnify shared accountability and responsibility in decision-making situations. Johnsonand Johnson (1993) noted that "diversity is celebrated within a cooperation context. And those who work and learn in a cooperative setting benefit from diversity, as it is the differences among members--differences in their talents, skills, perceptions, and thoughts--that make a cooperative group powerful" (p. xiii).

The 3 Cs And Multiculturalism

The 3 Cs (collaboration, consultation, and cooperation) have as their central theme "multiculturalism." As Pederson (1991) pointed out:

> Multiculturalism is a pervasive force in modern society that acknowledges the complexity of culture. During the last 20 years, multiculturalism has become recognized as a powerful force, not just for understanding "exotic" groups but also for understanding ourselves and those with whom we work in a complicated social context. Multiculturalism has gained the status of a general theory, complementing other scientific theories to explain human behavior. (p. 6)

Pederson's statement reiterates the fact that multiculturalism is not a simplistic construct or an exotic phenomenon such as eating food from a different culture. Multiculturalism is a way of life that should be incorporated into assessment, categorization, and pedagogy. Wax (1993) outlined three themes conveyed in the philosophy of multiculturalism as follows:

1. Every child (and every person) is a participant in culture and the product of a particular culture. The vision is of a one-to-one relationship between child and culture.

2. Given, that the child at school age is already a participant in a culture and a product of that culture, it follows that if school

ing is to be humane and efficient, it should begin at that point, reaching toward the child in his or her native culture. It should not assume that because the child is unfamiliar with some aspect of the dominant culture, its psyche is a vacuum, and the child is ignorant. Rather, the curriculum should be designed to deal with the child at the point of entry into formal education.

3. The culture of the school should reflect the population of the school. Rather than simply reflecting and reproducing the characteristics of Western civilization, or some elite within the national society, it should incorporate materials from the cultures of its pupils. This will provide them with a sense of belonging and with models of achievement; it will also be fair and equitable and will avoid the sin of Western chauvin ism and ethnocentrism. (p. 105)

Like other theories and constructs, multiculturalism has gone through conflicting misrepresentations and misinterpretations. Obiakor (1993) noted that multiculturalism has been confused with Afrocentrism, an ethnocentric movement to educate African American children solely on the basis of African cultures and symbols. Multiculturalism has other opposing perspectives. Gay (1994) confirmed that these perspectives are focused on negative social consequences associated with teaching about ethnic and cultural pluralism and the quality of multicultural scholarship. For example, critics feel that a philosophy of multiculturalism is in conflict with the basic goals of U.S. schools, which are to (a) teach students skills, (b) participate in the shared national culture, (c) promote allegiance to the values of the nation, (d) become competent in English, and (e) ensure national unity (D'Souza, 1991; Ravitch, 1990, 1991/1992; Schlesinger, 1992). According to these critics the philosophy of multiculturalism is an attempt to destroy Western European culturalheritage.

Ravitch (1990, 1991/1992) regarded multiculturalism as a threat to the unity in the United States. She indicated that the inclusion of

histories and cultures in school curricula is "ethnic particularism." Ravitch (1990) described ethnic particularism as a notion that:

> Teaches individuals that their identity is determined by their 'cultural genes,' that something in their blood or race memory or their cultural DNA determines who they are and what they may achieve, that they must immerse themselves in their 'native' culture in order to understand subject matter that is taught in school, that the culture they live in is not their native culture, and that American culture is Eurocentric. (pp. 46-47)

In a similar fashion, D'Souza (1991) argued that acknowledging cultural differences is divisive and will destroy European-based heritages of the United States. His criticisms in the book, *Illiberal Education*, are grounded in his documentation of failures of affirmative action programs and the assessment of college-level and ethnic minority and women studies at universities. In D'Souza's (1991) opinion, these programs create a "monolithic ideological focus that places minority sentiments on a pedestal while putting majority ones on trial" (pp. 214-215). Schlesinger (1992), in his book entitled, *The Disuniting of America*, also agreed that when multicultural education is carried to the extreme, the emphasis on cultural differences usually has serious negative ramifications, which include (a) the rejection of the vision of unifying individuals from all national origins into a single nation and culture; (b) decreased interests in integration and assimilation; and (c) increased levels of segregation and separatism among ethnic and racial groups.

Though the viewpoints of Ravitch (1990), D'Souza (1991), and Schlesinger (1992) appear enticingly patriotic, they lack the visionary knowledge of demographic changes that are taking place in America today. They seem to be politically oriented with a rigid conservative slant that downplays multiple voices, visible and invisible, in the socio-culturalarenas of the country. The recognition of these multiple voices highlights multiple capabilities, competencies, and intelligences that individual's bring to classrooms, schools, and communities. The major challenge that faces general and special

educators today is how best to capitalize on these strengths that add to the wonder of individuality.

Apparently, multiculturalism involves collaboration, consultation, inclusion, and partnership. In addition, it involves understanding and valuing of diverse skills and cultures that educators, service providers, parents, and students bring to the team. With multiculturalism, peoples' belief systems are re-oriented. This re-orientation motivates people to (a) care for all individuals, (b) have reasonable expectations of all individuals, (c) listen to all individuals, (d) have rewarding environments for all individuals, and (e) involve all individuals in problem-solving. Additionally, with multiculturalism, people are inspired to re-examine the traditional method of collaboration, consultation, and cooperation which involved a particular group of like-minded people who worked together while ignoring the potential contributions of other groups.

In reality, collaboration, consultation, and cooperation are mutually inclusive and not mutually exclusive in the education of African Americans with learning problems. It is important to understand when an African American learner has a "real" learning problem and/or when the problem is caused by (a) racially motivated identification, (b) assessment tools that lack validity and reliability, (c) stereotypic labels, (d) placement options that are restrictive, and (e) iatrogenic teaching (i.e., when teachers solve problems that do not exist). Based on these perspectives, "change" becomes an inclusive phenomenon that enhances school networking, parent partnership, community involvement, and even global understanding (Obiakor, Hawes, Weaver, & Schwenn, 1995; Obiakor, Hawes, & Weaver, 1995). Put another way, when educators, service providers, and parents leave their comfort zones, they begin to change their perceptions about people, events and situations, and thereby collaboratively combat school and societal problems. According to Gollnick and Chinn (1990), many school and societal problems stem from:

> A combination of several factors: (1) a lack of understanding of the history, experiences, values and perceptions of eth-

> nic groups other than one's own; (2) stereotyping the members of an ethnic group without consideration of individual differences within the group; (3) judging the other ethnic groups according to the standards and values of one's own group; (4) assigning negative attributes to members of other ethnic groups; and (5) evaluating the qualities and experiences of other groups as inferior to one's own. (p. 89)

It appears that Gollick and Chinn's (1990) statement is not limited to one ethnic group or one gender. People of all persuasions (including African Americans) have to learn to collaborate, consult and cooperate with each other if they are to seriously address local, national, or global problems confronting them. More than a decade ago, Toffler (1982) wrote:

> The responsibility for change, therefore, lies with us. We must begin with ourselves not to close our minds prematurely to the novel, the surprising, the seemingly radical. This means fighting off idea assassins who rush forward to kill any new suggestion on grounds of its impracticality, while defending whatever now exists as practical, no matter how absurd, oppressive, or unworkable it may be. It means fighting for freedom of expression, the right to voice their ideas even if heretical. (p. 443)

The 3Cs And The "Whole Village"

No school, business, or community can enjoy real success without multicultural collaboration, consultation, and cooperation. The connected well-being of peoples must be given serious consideration if their strengths, capabilities, and intelligences must develop in school programs (Gardner, 1993; Goodlad & Lovitt, 1993). In the words of Gardner (1993):

> The setting of standards, the delineation of credible curricula, and the creation of supportive environments, are all important components of an education for understanding. In the

> end, however, effective education depends upon the quality and commitment of the personnel, who are involved on a daily basis.....To assent to an education dedicated to understanding is one thing, to be able to achieve it quite another. Such an undertaking would constitute an enormous challenge for American teachers, who for the most part have been forced to settle for "coverage" rather than for "uncoverage," and whose own teaching performances have been evaluated either on purely technical grounds (paperwork properly filled out) or on the scores attained by students on externally mandated measures of dubious quality. (p.201)

Obiakor (1994), Samuelson and Obiakor (1995), and Toffler (1991) affirmed that powers and paradigms must be shifted to get desired educational outcomes. According to Samuelson and Obiakor (1995), "the best way to anticipate the future is to start very early to search for 'new' meaning" (p. 1). They added:

> To prepare ourselves for the coming shifts in the teaching paradigm, we can base our actions on some of the major pillars of quality teaching:
>
> 1. When in doubt, learn the facts.
> 2. Learn and teach with divergent techniques.
> 3. Embrace learning and continue to learn.
> 4. Engage in continuous discourse or dialogue with oth ers and with self. (p. 1)

The ideas espoused by Samuelson and Obiakor (1995) will not materialize without multicultural collaboration, consultation and cooperation of parents and practitioners. Other scholars (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995; Dettmer et al., 1993; Lyman & Foyle, 1993; Lyman, Foyle & Azwell, 1993; Putnam, 1993; Stainback & Stainback, 1990) advocated similar strategies for connecting classroom instructions with community partnerships.

In practical terms, schools and communities must work together to help African American learners with problems to maximize their

fullest potential. It is self-destructive to derogatorily categorize African American students, parents, and communities. The home has a role to play, the school has a role to play, and the society has a role to play. Based on this premise, I propose a Comprehensive Support Model (CSM) (Obiakor, 1994) to connect all parties involved. According to the CSM, educational excellence and success of African American learners must connect families, schools, and communities. The operational formula is, ES = F + S + O; i.e., Educational Success = Family + Schools + Opportunities. By family, I mean individual efforts and parents; by schools, I mean general and special educators, counselors and service providers; and by opportunities, I mean jobs, businesses and communities.

Efforts must be made to prepare African American students to assess and reassess each situation that they encounter specifically. In that way, they do not categorize all classroom problems as "racism." This preparation must be observable, measurable, and action-oriented. It is unrealistic to expect an African American student to succeed in educational programs without an accurate knowledge of the self, a strong and supportive parent or guardian, a culturally sensitive program and teacher/professor, and an array of opportunities and choices from respective communities.

All individuals must begin to appreciate and value diverse talents and gifts. By so doing, multiculturalism is enhanced. As Mendenhall (1991) pointed out, "in many parts of the United States it is a reality--and it is predicted that by the year 2010 it will be a reality for the entire American work place" (p. D7). He explained that "the more everyone knows and understands the same set of social values, the less interpersonal problems will result between group members" (p. D7). As a consequence, all members of the community must join in this pursuit for diversity. The reason is simple. Diversity encourages partnership, collaboration, consultation, cooperation, and excellence. Opportunities for growth must be encouraged for all individuals in the community, especially for those at risk of school failure. Logically, collaborative communities produce collaborative teachers and schools, and vice versa.

Collaborative Principles For Educators And Service Providers

For people working with African American learners with problems, it is imperative that they collaborate, consult, and cooperate with each other. To this end, they must respond to the following guiding educational principles (Obiakor, 1994):

1. Culture is not an exotic phenomenon, it is a part of human existence--we must incorporate cultural variables into our teaching-learning processes.

2. An inclusive classroom is a classroom that values coopera tive assessment and pedagogy.

3. All service providers have to relate to each other with the student as the "dominant" person.

4. It is not enough to say we care--we must also share.

5. We have to respect the strategic positions of people--our ex pectations of them have to be those that will not alienate or label them as individuals with deficits.

6. It is self-destructive to intimidate each other--when provided opportunities, all persons willingly provide valuable resources.

7. Good collaboration, consultation, and cooperation between educators, parents, and other professionals facilitate the teach ing "spirit."

8. "A tree can never make a forest"--we win alone, we lose alone!

9. The education of a child is not just a school's job or a parent's job--it is everyone's job.

10. We have come a long way--so, why stop? Let us continue to communicate!

Perspective

Collaboration, consultation, cooperation (3 Cs) are major ingredients of successful schools and communities for African American learners. I strongly believe they enhance our knowledge of historical symbols, behavioral patterns, cultural values, and notable events. My hunch is that our schools and communities will only succeed when all individuals,including African Americans believe they can share in the responsibility. As we advance into the 21st century, "shared responsibility" will be the guiding construct to help us maximize our fullest potential. Parents and professionals cannot continue to blame others for their failures. They must dialogue with each other to facilitate multicultural collaboration, consultation, cooperation, and excellence because "it really takes a whole village to raise a child."

87

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